

Chapter 8

Summary of Comments on the DEIS and Responses to Comments

CHAPTER 8 – COMMENTS ON THE DEIS AND RESPONSES

- **Summarizes the public involvement process for reviewing and commenting on the Draft EIS.**
 - **Describes the four forms in which comments are responded to in Appendix K: Umbrella Responses, the Comment Response Matrix, Responses to Meeting Comments; and Responses to Crossover Comments.**
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8.1 PROCESS AND RESULTS

After public release of the Draft FWIP EIS in June 2001, BPA held six public meetings and workshops (in Portland and Astoria, Oregon; Clarkston and Boise, Idaho; Seattle, Washington; and Kalispell, Montana) to receive comments (about 60 specific comments). During the comment period, the agency received 45 written comment letters (for a total of about 400 individual comments). Related comments received on the draft Endangered Species Act 2003/2003-2007 Implementation Plan for the FCRPS (July 2002) were also reviewed. BPA arranged for opportunities to interact directly with the interested members of the public and share ideas on specific aspects of the Draft EIS. In addition, the EIS Team contacted several commenters to clarify their concerns and ensure their issues were completely understood.

The comment letters and public meeting discussions confirmed three basic premises that we had established in the Draft EIS. They are as follows:

- **Different groups have different values and priorities, leading to different (and often conflicting) ideas about what recovery and mitigation efforts should be.** These differing positions on the correct approach to fish and wildlife mitigation and recovery still exist. No one policy direction or mixture of policy directions emerged as "best" from the comments. Some thought harvest should be reduced; others thought levels should stay the same, or even increase. Some thought that salmon as a species were not endangered or threatened--and provided some data and information to back their position. Others thought that even more stocks should be listed. Some thought dams should be removed; others thought the dams should stay in place.
- **There is no clear and agreed-upon scientific answer to the problem.** The science is still unclear. Several of the commenters advocated certain studies and findings, while others denounced the same or similar studies as not useful or unfounded. For example, comment letters number 18 and 31 denounced the use of the PATH analysis (Plan for Analyzing and Testing Hypotheses—a multi-agency scientific group tasked with assessing the likely effects of drawdown and other management options on Snake River spring/summer chinook) as outdated,

while letters number 34 and 44 encouraged reliance on the PATH data because it is the best science. Clearly, agreement has still not been reached on the "best" science across the Region.

- **Conflicting directives and jurisdictions of regional authorities have meant that funds dedicated to fish and wildlife mitigation and recovery efforts have often been used less efficiently and effectively that they otherwise could have been.** The wide variety of opinions and concerns about mitigation and recovery efforts expressed in the comment letters underscored that delays, inconsistencies, a piecemeal approach, and contradictory actions have hampered the Region's efforts. Several commenters criticized the lack of a regionally accepted plan and expressed concerns about the how much and how well money was spent.

In addition, many commenters expressed concerns over what is "reasonable" to consider. Some believe that removing the dams is not reasonable; others thought that leaving the dams in place was unreasonable. Some thought anything that couldn't be done under current laws or regulations was unreasonable. Still others appreciated a review of options that were not confined by existing laws or processes.

The EIS Team provided a means to "Build Your Alternative" (Draft EIS, Appendix I), so that readers could develop new alternatives; however, no one used this tool. From our own experience, we recognize how difficult it is to design a complete alternative. However, we are retaining the "Build Your Own Alternative" appendix (Appendix I) to use as the Region continues to work towards a solution for fish and wildlife mitigation and recovery issues. That way, different approaches may be developed as needs and conditions change over time. Refer to the analysis on the preferred alternative (PA 2002) in Section 3A of Chapter 3 for an example of how to apply the process described in Appendix I.

8.2 COMMENT TRACKING AND RESPONDING

It is important for decisionmakers and individual readers to be able to track what comments were made, how the EIS Team responded to those comments, and where in the document any changes might have been made as a result of the comments. Because the volume of material associated with the comments and the responses was substantial, we have placed the following materials in Appendix K:

- **Umbrella Responses.** Where a number of commenters addressed the same subject, we have written a general response that applies to several comments at once—an "umbrella" response. Umbrella Responses cover the following topics:
 1. Stating a Party's Preference
 2. Claims that BPA Advocated Certain Preferences in the Draft EIS
 3. The Concept of Tiered RODs
 4. Scope of the FWIP EIS

5. Hybrid Alternatives
 6. Reason for the EIS
 7. Qualitative versus Quantitative Analysis
 8. The Clean Water Act.
- **The Comment Response Matrix.** This extensive table contains individual comments from each submitted comment letter. A response has been prepared to each comment. Each comment letter received an individual number; each comment within the letter also received a unique identifying number. (For instance, the very first comment on the list comes from comment letter number 1, and is comment number 1. Therefore the comment is identified as 1/1.)
 - **Responses to Meeting Comments.** Several meetings or workshops were held during the public comment period. Informal notes were taken at each of these meetings. Comments excerpted from those notes and responses to those comments are included at the end of the Comment Response Matrix. Comments are tracked by meeting/comment number, similar to the tracking method used for comment letters.
 - **Responses to Crossover Comments.** Several letters submitted to the Action Agencies during the review of the draft Endangered Species Act 2003/2003-2007 Implementation Plan for the FCRPS contained comments directly related to the FWIP EIS. These comments, and the responses to them, appear in the Crossover Comments: Implementation Plan and the FWIP EIS Table.

Photocopies of all 45 comment letters received on the Draft EIS have been included in Appendix K. The individual comments have been marked.

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